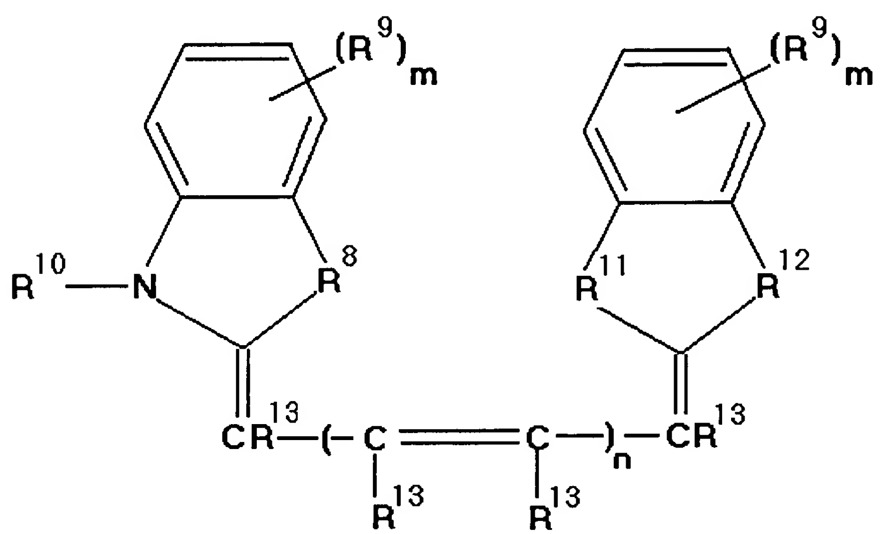
IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-83. (Canceled)

84. (Currently amended) A fluorescent compound of the formula:



wherein:

each m is 1~~separately an integer ranging from 1-3~~;

n is an integer ranging from 0 to 2~~5~~;

R^8, R^{11} and R^{12} are separately CO, SO_2, $C{=}C(CN)_2$, S, O or $C(CH_3)_2$;

each R^{13} is hydrogen, alkyl, branched alkyl or heterocyclic ring derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility and enhance photostability;

each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules;

wherein at least one R^9 charged group or reactive group, or at least one R^9 alkyl chain derivatized with a charged group is present on the compound; and

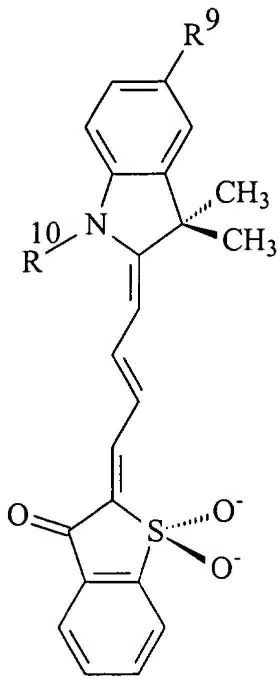
wherein each of said charged groups or reactive groups is separately SO_3^-, amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH_2-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine, hydroxylamine, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, or COO-Rx, wherein Rx is phenol or naphtol.

85. (Previously presented) The compound of claim 84 wherein each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, -NH-(C=O)-CH_2-halide, sulfonate, amide or ether or an alkyl chain derivatized with -NH-(C=O)-CH_2-halide, sulfonate, amide or ether.

86. (Previously presented) The compound of claim 84 wherein each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, SO_3^-, amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH_2-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine or hydroxylamine or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with SO_3^-, amide, ether, -NH-(C=O)-CH_2-halide, amine, maleimide, -N=C=O, -N=C=S, acyl halide, succinimidyl ester, sulfosuccinimidyl ester, sulfonyl halide, sulfonyl azide, alcohol, thiol, semicarbazide, hydrazine or hydroxylamine.

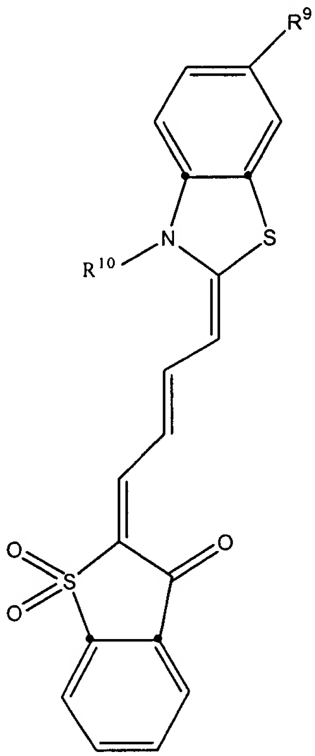
87. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 wherein ~~each~~ R^9 ~~and~~ or R^{10} is ~~separately hydrogen, SO_3^-, amide, ether, carboxylic acid, alkali or alkaline earth metal salt of carboxylic acid, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, acyl chloride, succinimidyl, sulfosuccinimidyl ester or COOR x, wherein x~~ COO-Rx, wherein Rx is phenol or naphtol ~~further substituted by at least one strong electron withdrawing group~~ or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with SO_3^-, amide, ether, carboxylic acid, alkali or alkaline earth metal salt of carboxylic acid, carboxylic acid activated by carbodiimide, acyl chloride, succinimidyl, or sulfosuccinimidyl ester ~~or COOR x, wherein x is phenol or naphtol further substituted by at least one strong electron withdrawing group~~.

88. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



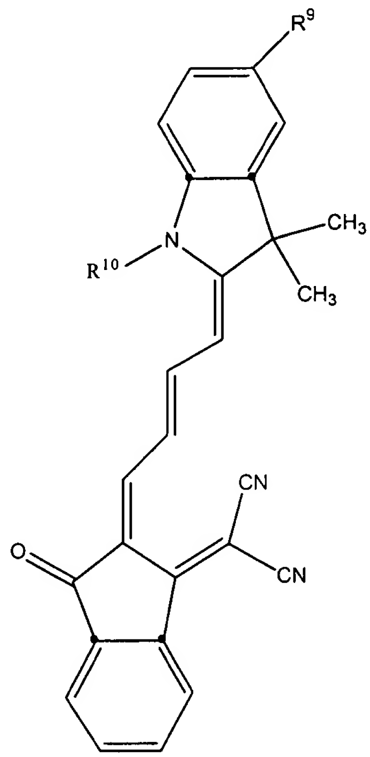
~~wherein each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules.~~

89. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



~~wherein each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules~~.

90. (Currently amended) The compound of claim 84 having the formula:



~~wherein each R^9 and R^{10} is separately hydrogen, a charged group, a reactive group or an alkyl chain that can be derivatized with charged groups to enhance water solubility or with reactive groups for conjugation to other molecules~~.

91-92. (Canceled)